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EAST AND WEST SERIES

[An Interpreter of the Life of the Spirit]

SONS OF KRISHNA

9/234

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A Message From Dr. Albert Schweitzer

I am deeply touched by the booklet* on my philosophy that you have published.

In my philosophy I am endeavouring to create in Europe an ideal of humanism of the same nature as that of the great thinkers of India.

I do believe it will be of great importance for this common ideal to exercise an influence on the thinking of the world to help us to come out of the great danger in which the world is at present.

With my best wishes,

Yours devotedly,
ALBERT SCHWEITZER

* Albert Schweitzer by T. L. Vaswani
[East and West Series No. 76]

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THE DIVINE FLUTE-PLAYER

9/234

INTRODUCTION

Sri Krishna's name rings down the corridor of history. He has stamped his name on, perhaps, the most marvellous civilisation of the ages. Sri Krishna, from his humble seat in the chariot on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, has moved India. Sri Krishna will move the world.

A hundred kingdoms have crumbled : and innumerable relics of ancient art and memorials of kings and statesmen are gone. Krishna has stamped his name upon the life and culture of the Aryan race.

In Krishna, as in the Buddha and Jesus,—and I hold that in all the three appeared the *Avataric* force,—the word did not remain a word, but became a living, moving reality. In Krishna the *Gita* became incarnate as a redemptive power of life. Therefore did the *Gita* change Arjuna's life on the battlefield. Therefore has the *Gita* changed countless lives in the ages of India's history. Therefore has the *Gita* fascinated so many of the great minds of East and West.

Emerson had a copy of the *Gita* always on his table. Carlyle was its devoted student, and his "gospel of duty" is a Western re-wording of the *Gita's* message. Dr. Leuders of Germany refers to the *Gita* as "one of the richest and most beautiful blossoms in the many-branched tree of Indian literature." Yet another and a greater German thinker, Dr. Humboldt, wrote :—"The *Bhagavad Gita* is the deepest and sublimest production that the world possesses. I read it with a permanent feeling of gratitude towards fate that has let me live in order to study this work."

Schlegel, the German scholar, salutes the *Gita* as a "revelation of the Spirit," and Dr. Albert Schweitzer regards it as

a scripture of wisdom. I dream of a day when, in a thousand cities and universities of the world, hundreds of thousands will be absorbed in the *Gita*.

The *Gita's* note of non-sectarianism will appeal to an increasing number of men and women in the coming days :—"On whatever path a man comes to meet Me, Arjuna, on that path I go to meet him : for all the paths are Mine!" Its wisdom, calm, temperate, dynamic, overpowering life,—"Act, Arjuna! renouncing all fruits of action,"—will purify and renew the life of nations. When I think of the quiet sovereignty of the *Gita* over milleniums of Indian history, I am lost in wonder and in praise.

MANY years ago, an eminent man of letters said :—"A dozen writers have achieved immortality in the past 2,500 years." And men in different parts began to debate as to whom to include in the list of the immortal twelve. The composite choice of fifteen distinguished writers fell on the following twelve :—Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, Virgil, Balzac, Cervantes, Goethe, Moliere, Plato, Dickens, Milton, Voltaire.

They all have written classics of enduring worth. Not one of them, to my mind, is inspired by a vision so rich, so synthetic, so vital as is the "*Bhagavad Gita*," which Sri Krishna gave on the Field of Kurukshetra. Centuries have saluted him as Sri Bhagavan Krishna, the Singer of Love Divine!

For him it was one to behold and to pour out compassion. He could not see another's sorrow and not be himself with sorrow filled.

There is the story of a girl who has fallen in sin : she comes to Krishna, penitent. He sees her tears. "Come near," he says to her. She comes nearer. Her tears fall on his

lotus-feet. He sits by her. With a piece of cloth, he dries her tears and says :—"Child! thy sins are forgiven thee. Go and sin no more!"

Theologians frighten us with the thought that the sinner is thrown into hell-fire and it is never quenched! Krishna says :—"Repent! Repent! Repent! And you may quench the very fire of hell with a single tear!" Krishna never taught that the sinner was condemned to endless punishment in hell. Krishna taught that the sinner, too, was blessed by the God of Mercy and Love.

When St. Francis passed through the country region, children,—we read,—went forth to meet him with banners and green branches. And with what joy did the cowherds and milk-maids of Gokul and Brindaban greet Krishna as he went, from street to street and grove to grove, singing on his Flute! Was there not in Krishna,—in the Man and his music,—a magnetism which threw a spell on many hearts? His flute sang of the love that moves the world and all the stars.

On the *Janmashthami* Day, I sang to him the song which is still sung by village-bards in Bengal :—

O Krishna!
Thou art as corn to the earth,
As fruit to the tree,
As water to the river!

Thou art as radiance to the jewel,
As lilies to the lake,
As eyes to the body,
As bhakti or devotion to worship!

Thou art as compassion to all!
Thou art as the Bridegroom to the bride!

THE emphasis of Krishna is on life,—not rites and ceremonies, not creeds and books. And to live is to give. Life is sharing. The *Gita* bears witness to this religion of sharing in a number of *slokas*. "He who cooks only for himself is a thief," says the *Gita*. Give! Share! The "communism" of Krishna is communion with others,—in service and sacrifice. The man of the *Gita* is he who shares. He is a man of self-abnegation. He is not an "egoist." He realises that the "ego," "I," is the great barrier to spiritual life. He is a man of Light. Behold the light of the sun! It flows out to all. It is not sectarian. Krishna's "communism" is the "communism" of love : it blesseth all.

"On whatever road men approach Me," says Krishna, "on that I go to meet them!" Children of the One Universal Spirit are we all,—men of diverse religions and "no-religion," believers and unbelievers. God comes to greet us,—in daily life. He comes to serve the broken ones. Service, not power, is the religion of the *Gita*. To live is to give,—to share. Not to share is to commit a theft.

There is, in the literature of China, a significant Taoist legend of the "Kingdom of the Ants." We read of an ex-soldier who is become a peasant. To his deep regret he finds that he never finds time to reflect or meditate : his days and nights are laden with heavy work. One night, he dreams a dream in which he marries a rich girl, and finds time to meditate and acquire wisdom. And, growing in wisdom, he realises that to wear fine clothes and dine well and gather silver and gold, when around him are men and women and children who starve and are in tattered clothes, is, verily, to be a "thief." And in sleep, he says to himself:—"I shall be a new man. Today, alas! I live in luxury when so many are in poverty. Am I better than a robber, a thief?"

The *Gita's* call to us is :—"Awake! Open your eyes to the

sufferings of your brothers and sisters! See how many lie naked and hungry by the wayside! Awake, and go forth to share with others what you have! Awake, move among men, identify yourself with the poor and needy, and share with them in the service of love! To give love and compassion to all who suffer and cry for relief,—this is to *live* the *Gita*. In this sympathy, this service, this sharing of my life with the poor and weak,—I come to Krishna the Beloved. In this service I, verily, stand in his presence : I worship him standing before him, face to face!

This is the true life to which Krishna calls us. Its twofold call is:—(1) adore the Mystery that moves among men,—aye, among all creatures,—in all things great and small,—the Mystery that shineth ever in the heart; and (2) serve the broken, bleeding children of the Earth,—men and birds and beasts and insects and the fish in the sea.

In the *Gita* I hear Krishna's teaching of the dedicated life. What is its secret? Act, but cut off all creaturely attachments. Dedicate your actions to the Lord. Krishna's doctrine of *karma*, the doctrine of the deed, is, essentially, related to the doctrine of dedication (*arpanam*).

Act, but with no desire for "fruits" or personal gain. Act, but relate your actions to the Eternal, the Infinite. Act, but let your action be an offering to Krishna. Let it be a *yagna* (sacrifice) offered to the *Yagneswara* (Lord of Sacrifice). Then your *karma* will be reduced to a zero and can no longer bind you to the wheel of birth and death.

Such an act,—a dedicated act, a *yagna*, a sacrifice to the Lord,—becomes a channel of grace. It flows from the Infinite into your heart and makes you new, transforms you, makes you a vesture of His Beauty, His Truth, His Holiness.

The essence of Krishna's doctrine of the dedicated life

is affirmed in the following words of Krishna to Arjuna :—

Whatever you give,
Whatever you eat,
Whatever you do,—
Let it all be, Arjuna!
A sacrifice to Me!

The dominant aspiration of the man who dedicates his life to the Lord is :—

Behold, Beloved!
I travel in Thy strength!
I walk in Thy way,—of Love,—
Until, in all I do,
I walk with Thee!
And this life becomes
A point in the movement of Thy Life,—
In the cycle of Thy Love!

A dedicated act is desireless, is detached. "Slay thou the enemy," saith Krishna to Arjuna, "in the form of desire!" In such an act the thought disappears :—"Will it bring me loss or gain?" In this surrendered action, there is but one aspiration :—

I dedicate myself to Thee!
I sacrifice all to Thee!

So it is that Krishna tells Arjuna, again and again :—"You have the right to work, but not to the fruits thereof!"

Therefore does Krishna teach Arjuna :—"To act aright is to destroy 'I,' the 'ego.' When the "ego" goes, we grow,—in love. It is difficult to surrender the "ego." I may lose my friends, my health, my job, my money. But how difficult it is to say :—"Let my 'I' be lost! Let my 'ego' be a zero!" One offering only doth Krishna ask of us,—the

offering of "I," the "ego."

Egoless action,—is what Krishna asks us to offer to the Universe. To be egoless is to be as a "child." The true Krishna-*bhakta* becomes as a child. So it is that the picture of Krishna as a child,—*Bala Gopala*,—is so dear to Krishna-lovers. Jesus said :—"Unless ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

And becoming a "child," the devotee of the Lord grows in simplicity and purity, in sweetness and meekness. Indifferent to the "gains" of the world, rising above the profit-and-loss-philosophy of life, he becomes magnetic : he attracts because Krishna is with him. The great Muslim mystic of Baghdad, Rabia, was fond of one little couplet. She recited it, again and again :—"My Beloved! Be with me still!"

The *Gita* calls us to renounce the "ego" and live in union with the Life Divine. "If any man will come after Me," Jesus said, "let him deny himself!" Cease to belong to yourself, and your very silence will affirm Him. "Die to live," said the great German thinker, Hegel. When I die to the "ego," I surrender, I become a "zero" : and entering into "nothingness," I shine in the light of Krishna. Interior "annihilation" is essential to creative life.

One sign of the man who is become "naught" may be noted. He has the gift of illuminating others. A word from him is enough. His very "silence" is illuminating. His silent looks transform many lives.

This, then, is what the Krishna-man achieves : he empties himself : he enters into *fana*. What the sufi mystics call *fana*, the Teacher of the *Gita* calls *Brahma-Nirvana*. We offer our all as a *yagna*, sacrifice, to God. He becomes our All! Emptied of myself, I become God-filled. Becoming naught, I reflect the "pure Spirit." Renouncing desire and appetite, pleasures and honours, I announce the Eternal

in every act and aspiration of my life. Then I realise what it is to love the Cross as Christ loved it. I realise what it is to bless all as, indeed, Krishna blessed the hunter who struck down the Master with an arrow in the Forest.

Right action is "pure action,"—is *karma* emptied of appetite or desire. Right action is surrendered action,—action offered as a sacrifice to the Lord. All external codes of morality fall short of Krishna's ideal of "action." The religion of the *Gita* is not an external code : Krishna's religion is a *yagna* in which action is blended with worship and love (*bhakti*). Action, then, becomes a vehicle of God's grace. Action becomes meditation and communion with God and man. Renouncing all "fruits" of action, offering them to the Lord, saying, "Do with them what Thou wilt," you adore the One Divine Will working in you and others,—working in the world, in Nature, and in the procession of history.

Science and technology made the last world-war a terrific explosion of dark forces. But he who assimilates the teaching and life of the Divine Master, begins to see that evil may be conquered not philosophically, not scientifically but *practically* through dedicated life,—a life which is a *yagna*, an offering, to the Lord,—a sacrifice to the Life Divine.

In these pages I speak of a few *bhaktas* of Krishna,—devotees and disciples of the Master. I call them sons of Krishna. Krishna's devotees have always been rich in reverence for the poor and forlorn. The name "India" is derived from a word given by Greek travellers to this country. In our ancient Books, the name is "Bharata" : one meaning of the word is "*ahuti*," "oblation," "*yagna*," "sacrifice." In this one word, "sacrifice," is summed up the essence

of Krishna's call to his devotees (*bhaktas*) and disciples. They have borne witness to the spirit of sacrifice. In that ancient story, Dhruva poured out his daily aspiration in the words :—"May I to Thee, O Lord, be a sacrifice!"

Chaitanya, the scholar, resigned his chair of philosophy at Nadia to become a servant of the poor and lowly. Voices came to him and, with tear-filled eyes, he followed the flute through forests and fields to serve and be sanctified.

Sanatanam and Rupam were born to princely fortunes. They held their high offices under a Muslim king but, under Chaitanya's influence, they renounced their wealth and position to follow the flute : they became servants of the poor, the meek and lowly.

Mira renounced her palace and became a servant of the poor, simple village-folk. And to her, as to Joan of Arc, spake voices of the Lord of Love.

Raghunath was a prince. He called himself a 'das,' a "servant" of Krishna. Raghunath, like Buddha, renounced his property, and found joy in spreading the message of compassion and love among the simple folk.

Narottama was another prince. He lived in a palace specially built for him by his father, a multi-millionaire. He heard the Master's flute-voice, saying:—"Come unto Me, My child!" And Narottama said:—"Blessed am I, Master! Thou dost call me. Not for me is this palace."

Narottama is still in his teens. His palace becomes to him a prison. He is anxious to escape to Brindaban,—and live there in holy poverty. But he is guarded by his father's servants, day and night. In a poem of exquisite beauty, he pours out his heart at the feet of Krishna:—

I weep, day and night, and long for thy service :
Make me, Lord! thy humble serving maid!
This be my aspiration day by day :—

"Be merciful to me, thy servant!"

Narottama, at last, makes good his escape from the palace and walks bare-footed to Brindaban and there exclaims:—"Blessed am I! How happy I feel to have meals with the poor!"

The deep longing of Narottama's heart for Krishna and Radha, for Gauranga and the *bhaktas* of the Beloved sings in his songs. In one of them, we read:—

When will thrills of joy pass through my body
As I hear the sacred name,—Gauranga?
When shall I shed tears of joy
At the Name of Hari,—the Saviour?

Nitai! O Nitai!
A bhakta art thou of the Lord!
Wilt thou not take mercy upon me and bless me
So that all my desires are dead?

When, O Krishna! shall I be pure?
When wilt thou accept my renunciation
And grant me a vision of thy face?

In another song, Narottama sings:—

O Lord! Thou art Hari, the Saviour of all!
When shall I forget myself in the joy of service?
When wilt thou accept my service of the poor and lonely?
Narottama weepeth day and night:
Narottama longs for service of the poor.

In yet another song, Narottama sings:—

O Lord! My Saviour!
When wilt thou make me a servant
Of thy beloved Brindaban?
When shall I cover my body

With the blessed dust of Braja?

I have renounced the scented waters of golden jars :
I long to drink, with folded hands,
The simple water of the Jamuna.

And under the banyan tree I fain would see
The Master sing on his flute
In the midst of his beloved bhaktas.

One day, Narottama comes to Mathura and stays there for some days. To the King of Mathura comes the minister in charge of royal buildings and the temples in the realm and says:—"Your Majesty's Temple has been built in beauty : it is the noblest building in the realm. But the Temple is empty!"

"Why?" asks the King, vexed at heart.

"A saint is come from Brindaban. He is a devotee of Sri Krishna. He was, at one time, a prince. He calls himself a 'das,' a servant of the Lord. The people call him Narottama."

"Yes," says the King. "I know the name. His father had two palaces on the river-bank. He was my friend. What about Narottama?"

"Sire!" the minister says, "Narottama has not entered your great Temple even once. He sits under the trees by the open road : and sitting there, he sings the Name of Krishna, day and night. And thousands throng to join the saint in his worship underneath the trees. Your Temple, sire! is a deserted place."

The King's announcement goes forth to the people that they who will join in the worship in the Temple, twice a day, will receive one gold *mohur*. But they accept not the offer of the King. "Our place," they say, "is by the side of the saint underneath the trees by the open road."

The King is deeply distressed to find that his Temple

is deserted still. He goes himself to the spot where sits the saint on the grass-covered ground.

The King says to Narottama:—"Father of us all are you, O saint of God! Your name is known to me. Your father was my friend. I come to tell you that a Temple seeks you. It is built under my orders : it has a golden dome. Why are you here in the dust? I request you to come and worship the Lord in the Golden Temple."

"I cannot offer worship there!"

"What is the reason, O saint of God?"

"Because," says Narottama, "Krishna is not there!"

The King is annoyed and says:—"You know not, O saint! that I have spent crores of rupees to build it. And it has been consecrated to Krishna with costly rites. The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bhagavata* were recited to bless it, and *sutras* and *slokas* were read to purify the grounds and the spacious Hall."

Narottama says:—"Sire! I know your Temple has cost crores of rupees : but it is not beautiful, for Krishna is not there. Thousands of your people stood at your door for help: their houses had fallen down in the floods. They asked for food : they asked in vain! You turned them out of your palace doors. And you ordered, too, that your Golden Temple was not open to the poor but only to the comfortable and the rich. And my Master said to me:—'This king who has turned the poor out of his Temple has turned Me out. My dwelling is in the cottages of the poor!' So it is, sir, I worship the Lord under these trees by the open road!"

"Sire!" the saint says further, "I cannot come to your Temple : it is but a bubble of vanity. My place is at the Lotus-feet of the Lord. And He dwells not where the poor are not present to give their benedictions!"

The King's anger knows no bounds, and he says : "Narottama! you cannot stay in my realm! Depart!"

Narottama with a gentle smile on his lips departs, saying :—"Sire! I go where dwells the God of the poor!"

And the Temple with the Golden Dome continued to be empty until it crumbled to the dust!

THE simple are spiritually alive. The cowherds and milk-maids were truly simple. What a joy they felt in fellowship with Krishna! Their joy was a sign of their spiritual health and strength. This is what a cowherd says in a story of the *Bhagavata* :—

When we sleep, we dream of thee, Krishna!
When awake, we think of thee, Krishna!
Active or abed, we utter thy Name, Krishna!

Krishna sang on the flute for the poor in spirit. He sang, also, to Nature. The heart of Nature is simplicity. In leaf and grass, Krishna saw the hidden message of the flute. And in story after story, we read that in answer to his Song, the trees trembled and the flowers bloomed and the peacocks danced and the rivers swelled and spring became more fragrant and the woodland more musical.

A *gopi* asked :—"What good *karma* did the flute do to drink in the nectar from Krishna's lips?" The answer to the question is known to every *bhakta*. The flute emptied itself, and through it Krishna breathed his music into many hearts. The message of the flute is, in brief :—"Renounce! Renounce! And announce the Eternal to pilgrims on the Path!" In a pretty, little poem, Radha sings the very heart of the flute. She says to Krishna :—

Beloved!
What more can I say?
In death, as in life,

In birth after birth,
Be thou the Lord of my life!
Thy lotus-feet are firmly held
In my heart.
Beloved! I take refuge
At thy lotus-feet!

Like Jesus and the Prophets of the *Old Testament*, like Mahavira and the Buddha, Krishna had deep love for the simplicities of life and for the simple village folk. His dear ones have, through the centuries, delighted to live in the "cottage,"—have voluntarily embraced poverty. Krishna's *bhaktas*, like Sudama, have been simple yet rich in the Lord's remembrance,—the only treasure that counts!

Who were the first worshippers of Krishna? Simple cowherds and milkmaids and cows! Who were his companions in Brindaban? And who brought him up in Braja? Simple cowherds. Krishna's religion knows no "caste." As Sri Chaitanya said :—"If a *mochi* (cobbler) has *bhakti*, I bow to him a thousand times." With what joy poor Sudama goes to meet Krishna! Here is an extract from a medieval song :—

Sudama, the simple, poor Brahmin, comes with a striped turban on his head.
He almost reels like a madman for joy in the expectation of meeting Krishna!

The "joy" springs from a consciousness of the fact that Krishna, a lover of the simple life, loves Sudama. And sometimes, I think, if we asked him today, what we must do to follow him, his answer to us would be :—"Be simple, And serve all creatures who are in need of sympathy and help. For in all dwells the One who is the Spirit of Love!"

Is not God the Great Wandering Brother of the poor? He wanders from place to place to bless and heal the broken

ones.

Krishna and his flute have inspired Hindu art, Hindu philosophy, Hindu literature, Hindu worship. Krishna and his flute have sung of the love that moves the worlds and stars.

It is no wonder Krishna has appealed to men and women in many lands. A Muslim lady, hardly thirty years of age, when asked why she loved Krishna, said :—"It is true I am a Muslim. It is, also, true I have found a new life in *Krishna-bhakti*." A Christian mystic wrote to me from England, many years ago, that he rejoiced in Krishna's name. Krishna was, to him, "an ideal character like that of Jesus."

THERE is a book rich in wisdom, radiant in the light of the Spirit. It is named the *Kural*. Its author was a saint. He lived in the South. With what reverence and love is his name uttered by every one who reads the *Kural*, rightly regarded as the "Fifth Veda" ! Tiruvalluvar was his name. He was, like Kabir, a weaver by profession. He came under the influence of the wisdom enshrined in the *Gita* and became a *bhakta* of Krishna, a seer and a teacher of spiritual life.

In the *Kural*, he calls upon all to do their duty, renouncing all desire for "fruits" of action. "Be like a cloud," he says, "that pours water but asks for nothing in return." There is the secret of *inner* freedom. These two notes of the *Gita* are sounded by the great teacher of the *Kural* :—(1) the ethic of inwardness; and (2) the ethic of love,—*bhakti*. Life is not meant to be hoarded : life is meant to be given away, given freely to all, given in love and joy. "The man full of love," says the inspired teacher of the *Kural*, "gives his very bones to others!"

The voice of the *Kural* is the voice of the ages, the voice of the saviours of humanity. It says :—"Give! Give! Give! Give the wealth of your heart, the wealth of your dedicated life." For great is the world's tragedy. Your treasure, sons of the sages of the East! is not your bank accounts, not your cash certificates,—not your silver and gold. Your treasure is the treasure of the Heart. The wealth of the world is no better than the world itself,—passing, transient, ashes and dust! Give ye the wealth of loving service!

There are those who give,—to receive applause. But a few there be who give,—in sympathy and joy. They believe in the bounty of life : and in their eyes shines the Krishna-light! They give not as do those who say they will give only to the "deserving." They give as giveth the sun its light to the "good" and the "bad" alike. They give, for they have been taught that to give is to live and to hold back is to turn away from the light and pass into the night!

Moving out for a walk, one evening, I met a peasant. How simple was he! And how humble!

We sat together on the grass. And I said to him :—"Brother! what is your deepest aspiration?"

He said :—"To be a true man!"

I returned to my place, then sat in my meditation-corner and said :—"My brother! you have taught me much. Let me, too, strive to be a true man. So let me renounce all thought of gain, all desire for fame, all scramble for success! Let me dedicate my life to the Beloved!"

A mystic of the sixteenth century, named Malook, showed in his life and teaching the beauty of the life of dedication to Sri Krishna. Malook lived in a difficult period in India's history. Aurangzeb, the Muslim emperor of India, was an autocrat : under his orders, many Hindu temples were razed to the ground. Malook was a devotee of Krishna,

and breathed out love to all. Fateh Khan, one of the generals of Aurangzeb, became a devoted disciple of Malook. Fatch Khan rejoiced in the name of Krishna.

Malook had a catholic heart. He saw the unity of Rama and Krishna and was known as a singer of *Rama-Nama* and a singer of *Hari-Nama*. "Hari" is one of the many names of Krishna. The word "Hari" means "one who takes away,"—takes away the sins and sufferings of men.

Aurangzeb was constrained to honour Malook. His birthplace, Kara, was exempted, under orders issued by Aurangzeb, from paying the special tax, called *jazia*, imposed on Hindus in different parts of India. Malook saw in a vision his Master, Sri Krishna, "in the dress of a labourer, a *mazdoor*." "My Beloved," said Malook, "my Leader,—Krishna,—is, indeed, a *mazdoor*, a labourer. He is the friend of the poor."

Wonderful was Malook's faith in *Hari-Nama*,—the Name of the Lord. People looked up to Malook with reverence and attributed to him a number of miracles. "O friends!" he said, "the greatest miracle is my Master,—Krishna!" In his little book, named *Illuminations*, the central message is :—"Awake! Awake! And dedicate your life to Krishna!" My heart," he said, "is in Thee absorbed!" One of his songs closes on the note :—

I have met the Master!
The Beloved hath blessed me!
I sing of Him!
He singeth to me!
I gaze at the beauty
Of the Beloved!
Blessed am I!

And blessed was Radha. In an ancient book, we read of the "eternal Radha-Krishna" as a "single figure," separa-

ting into Radha and Krishna. "They separately performed *tapas* for a thousand *yugas*, and a light proceeded from the bodies of both. From that light originated the divine Brindaban."

It is a beautiful way of representing the idea of the soul's eternal union with the Lord. That mystic union is sundered when the soul is embodied on the earth-plane. Krishna's Flute is a call for re-union. And every heart must become a Radha, a woman-soul, to be re-united with Krishna. The woman-soul has longing, has *bhakti*. In the scriptures we read that Radha and Krishna met at Jamuna. Every heart must become a Jamuna, a stream flowing with love.

Krishna teaches in the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata* that "love" is *not* "desire." Desire runs after the senses, but love is communion with the Infinite. Radha loved Krishna and was transformed into his image. Radha's love transcended sex and individuality. Her love was chastity, purity, communion : it transcended egoism. Radha's love was appetite : her love was communion with Krishna, communion with the supreme self, the *Atman*. Radha rose above desire : and her love-filled heart was fashioned into fairness.

Radha was the daughter of a prince : but in her heart was a longing for communion with Krishna. In a poem by Chandidas, Radha says :—"A weak woman am I : but I am spotless in my heart!" "Lotus-eyed" has she been called in the songs of medieval poets. As she looked upon the Face of Krishna, she was purged of all desire. She became the very picture of purity. In the picture painted of her by India's saints, she is represented as filled with love and longing in her heart. "A flood of tears," we read, "rolled down Radha's cheeks as she thought of Krishna." In a mood which comes upon her, again and again, she

says :—

I know not who is he
Who plays upon the flute!
I know whose picture pursueth me :
It thrills me through and through!

And wherever I move or stay,
I am wonder-filled!
I am lost in the picture that pursueth me!
The picture follows me :
The picture binds to him my heart!

And thou, O Lord! art become my all-in-all!
I dedicate myself to thee,—
To thy lotus-feet.
I dedicate myself to thy service,
O thou of the Ancient Day!

Krishna puts Eternity in the hearts of his *bhaktas*. This Eternity is Love! It is the Infinite in man : it is the very secret of spiritual life. This is the *Dharma Sanatanam*,—the Eternal Religion. It is the Religion of the Flute. It is God's Revelation made luminous in Krishna and Christ, in Chaitanya and Francis, in Laotze and Zarathustra, in Nanak and Kabir, in Bayazid and the Buddha, in the Saints and Lovers of Humanity.

T. L. VASWANI

A BRIDE OF THE BELOVED

FOUR centuries and a half ago, was born, in a village in Mewar, that spiritual genius, the great singer of the love of God,—Saint Mira. She lives in the heart of India. Her songs are so unspeakably rich in the wisdom of the Spirit! Her life was so simple and so sublime!

"God's saints are shining lights," said a mystic. From the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from Karachi to Calcutta, Mira is to many a "shining light." The secret of her "light" is devotion (*bhakti*) to Krishna.

In the Rajasthan, in Gujerat, and in North India, her songs are still sung in many homes, the central note of the songs being :—"I abandon all to Thee, O Lord! To Thee I surrender all I am!"

The songs are so sweet: they inspire and uplift the heart. Not without reason is Mira called "the sweet singer of Rajputana." Again and again, have I read the following songs of Mira enshrined in the "Adi Granth" of the Sikhs :—

With the twine of His mercy hath He,
O Mother! entwined my heart!

The sharp arrow of His Love,
O Mother! hath pierced me, through and through!
When did the arrow strike me?
I know not! I only know
I cannot endure it now.

O Mother! drugs and charms have I with me,
But pain departeth not!
Who will treat me? Who?
O, the agony of the arrow!

Come quick, my Master!
Come! Be Thou not far!
Come quick to meet me, Lord!

Mighty art Thou, O mountain-mover!
And ever compassionate art Thou!
With the twine of Thy mercy
Hath Thou entwined my heart,
O Thou of the Lotus-Eyes!

The fame of her songs spread far and wide : and there is a tradition, not supported by history, which says that they ravished the heart of the great Emperor, Akbar. He was a great lover and patron of music. He came in disguise, we are told, and paid homage to Mira. Listening to her songs, I have sometimes said to myself :—"Mira sings from the heights : she sings as one in whose heart burns the flame Divine!"

At a very early age, Sri Krishna puts his song in her mouth. She becomes a flute of the Lord. The orientation of her soul is every day towards Sri Krishna. So is her life gradually transformed into an Image of the "Beloved." She is persecuted for her devotion to Shyama : but she remains calm. Persecuted by members of her own house, Mira becomes, more and more, a reflection of the beauty and love of Sri Krishna. Is not this a mark of the true *bhakta* of the Lord? The Gita calls it "*sthitapragna.*" The wise man, though persecuted, remains calm : he is in communion with God.

A deep longing for the Lord inspires many of her lyrics. Some of them I have listened to, again and again, with tear-touched eyes. What a cry pierces the heart as you listen to the following song of Mira!

Beloved!
I wander still
In quest of Thee!
I am athirst
For Thy Eternal Love!

I long to make
My body a lamp,—
The wick whereof will be
My tender heart.
And I would fill the lamp
With the scented oil
Of my love for Thee!
Then let it burn,
Day and night,
At thy shrine,
Beloved!

I can no longer bear
To be away from Thee,
Make me Thine own!
Make me like Thee!
And make me pure
As Thou art pure,
Beloved!

MIRA comes to Sri Krishna through her mother. Standing on the roof of her house, one day, Mira sees a marriage-procession and the bridegroom in the procession. The bridegroom is called "*dulaha.*" Deeply impressed with the sight, Mira runs to her mother and asks :—"Mother! where is my *dulaha?*"

And Mira's mother says offhand :—"Girdhara Gopal."

The word "*dulaha*" means not only "bridegroom" but,

also, the "beloved."

From this day onward, Mira never forgets that her *dulaha*, the "Beloved," is Girdhara Gopal, Krishna! From this day onward, Mirà regards herself as the bride of Sri Krishna! And, every day, she thinks of him : she builds an Image of Shyama from the dust of the earth and, sitting in silence, looks at the Image, again and again. Absorbed in the one thought, the one vision of Shyama, is Mira everyday.

Some days after this arrives in Mira's village a *sadhu*. He has with him a small Image of Girdhara Gopal. Mira sees that the *sadhu* worships this Image. And she runs to her mother, saying :—"Mother! get me that Image of Shyama."

The mother requests the *sadhu* if he would give the Image to Mira.

The *sadhu* says :—"Mother! Shyama is my *Ishta*, my Lord, to whom I offer daily worship. And wherever I go, I take this Image with me. Not for a single moment am I away from the Image. How can I give It to Mira?"

And Mira's mother reports to Mira what the *sadhu* has told her. At night, the *sadhu* has a vision of Sri Krishna in his sleep. Sri Krishna says to him :—"My devotee art thou : wilt thou not pass on My Image to Mira?"

And early in the morning, the *sadhu* comes to Mira's house and gives the Image to Mira's mother, saying :—"To Mira I give this Image,—my richest treasure,—for the Lord hath so ordered me."

Krishna now is to Mira a living Holy Presence. Krishna is not to her a far-off God, sitting somewhere in the clouds or a star. Krishna is become to Mira her Spouse, *dulaha*, her Beloved. The longing in her heart becomes deeper every day for union with Krishna. And she takes joy in renouncing her earthly things for the sake of her "Beloved."

MIRA was the only daughter of Ratan Sing, a brave Rajput prince, who fought the Moghul invader and, at last, died on the battle-field. After Ratan Sing's death, Mira lived, in Merta, with her grand-father, Dudaji.

The dominant faith of Rajputana was devotion to Shiva : but Rana Dudaji was a devout Vaishnava. So was Mira brought up in the Vaishnava atmosphere.

The ruler of Mewar was Rana Sanga. His eldest son was Prince (Kanwar) Bhoj Raj. To him was Mira married. So great was Mira's *bhakti* for Krishna, that she took with her the Image of Sri Krishna which the *sadhu* had given her. Before this Image Mira would often sit and sing songs of thanksgiving to Sri Krishna. She did not neglect her household duties. Her devotion to her husband was as keen as her *bhakti* for Krishna.

Soon after her marriage, Prince Bhoj Raj died. And Mira was filled with the spirit of *vairagya* (detachment, renunciation). Day and night, she would sit at Krishna's Feet and sing songs dedicated to the Lord. The one word on her lips was "Gopala." This word means "Guardian" of the Earth as, also, "Protector" of the Cow. Gradually, Mira grew, also, in the love of *sadhus* (servants of God). She served them with singular devotion.

The ruler of Mewar,—Mira's father-in-law, Rana Sanga,—died. He was succeeded by Rana Ratan Sing, who was succeeded by Rana Vikramajit : it was he who subjected Mira to many hardships. He had a bad temper, and he was not well-disposed to Mira. Day after day, was Mira persecuted. She bore it all in patience : she was dauntless in her devotion to Sri Krishna : in every difficult situation she found consolation in remembering the Lord.

The Rana asks her to give up *bhakti* for the Lord. Gentle yet firm, Mira continues to sing her songs of devotion. The Rana tells her to think of what the people will say. Mira's

answer is :—"Let them say!" The Rana asks her to keep away from the company of the *sadhus*. She tells the Rana to sit at their feet and purify himself.

Mira spends much of her time now in the Temple, specially built for her by her husband, Prince Bhoj Raj. Mira sings in the Temple : Mira dances before the Image of Sri Krishna. The Rana gets more and more annoyed : he sends to Mira her two lady-friends who ask her to give up singing and dancing and be obedient to the Rana. Mira's answer is :—

O friends!
Dyed deep am I
In the colour of Him
To whom I am consecrated,—
The colour of Krishna

The two ladies are so deeply impressed with what Mira says that they themselves begin to sing and dance in Mira's company. They came to convert Mira : they stayed to sing and dance!

The Rana sends his sister, Uda Bai, to bring her round. Uda Bai, too, is converted and joins in the worship of Krishna, singing with Mira the Name of the Lord.

This irritates the Rana. He sends a cup of poison to Mira through a messenger who says to her :—"Mira! this is *amrita* (nectar) : drink it!" The story has it, that she accepts the cup.

Uda Bai tells her :—"This is a cup of poison, Mira! Don't drink it!"

Mira says :—"I accept it as a cup of *amrita*."

She places the cup at the Feet of Krishna, then drinks it. Mira remains unaffected!

The Rana is surprised, but does not yet understand. He declares :—"Mira shall not live ! Mira shall not live!"

He sends her a basket, placing in it a serpent. "Mira!" says the Rana's messenger to her, "this basket is sent you by the Rana as a gift."

Once again, Mira accepts it. She opens the basket. Where is the serpent? She sees in the basket a picture of Sri Krishna! Not yet does the Rana understand. He continues to persecute Mira!

She now feels she should not stay in the palace. She should be in a place where she may worship her Lord unobstructed. She sends a letter to the great Saint, Tulsi Das. She asks him if, indeed, she would not be justified in leaving the palace for some place where the mind may be at peace and where she may worship her Lord, undisturbed. Mira, in her letter to the Saint, writes :—

"They, of my own household, have combined against me and my difficulties are multiplied.

"Great is the trouble they give me in my endeavour to serve the *sadhus*,—the pure ones,—and to do *kirtan*, singing Krishna's Name.

"O Saint of God! Thou art like my mother, my father : and thou art the giver of joy to *Hari-bhaktas*, devotees of Krishna.

"O tell me, what is right for me to do. Write to me that I may understand."

In answer to this, Saint Tulsi Das writes thus to Mira :—

"This be my conviction that He, Rama, is the dearest of all, worthy of all worship, the Breath of all breath, the one Beloved. To His Lotus-feet let me be devoted for ever!"

On reading this letter, Mira rejoices and is now prepared to start for Brindaban. Her *sakhis* (sister-friends) feel very sorry. Uda Bai tries her best to persuade her not to

go. To her and others Mira answers in a few words, filled with tenderness towards all and with longing for her Lord. The central note of her answer is :—"I shall be now a *vairagini* (homeless wanderer), singing the Name of Him who is the one Beloved,—who is my All."

Mira quickly leaves the palace, singing the Name of the Beloved. The true *bhakta* never turns back. The true *bhakta's* watchword is, "Onward!" Mira, devoted to her one Lord, runs fast, leaving her palace and all worldly comforts behind. The midnight stars shine on her as she descends, step by step, and then wanders along the bank of the Ganges, crying :—"Shyama! Shyama!" The beauty of murmuring waters passes into her face, making it all the more beautiful.

Mira leaves Chitor, in the darkness of the night. Alone, she moves out. Such, indeed, is ever the fate of those who would meet the Lord. They must tread the path alone!

This period is a difficult one in Mira's life. A difficult period, yes,—and a blessed one. In this period it is that she passes through her destined "darkness of the soul."

Mira is a Rajput girl. Heroically, she moves out with love and longing in her heart. Heroically, she travels on the road alone. She passes through village after village. She blesses all who meet her. Boys and girls of cowherds come from many places to greet her, to serve her and be blessed by her. She moves on! In her heart is the Image of her Beloved alone.

A little prince said to some friends :—"Men cultivate thousands of roses in one garden. Yet they do not find what they seek, though they can find all they seek in a single rose or a single drop of water. They seek, but they find not. Their eyes are blind! They truly seek who seek with the *heart*."

Mira moves out alone on the path of quest, seeking with

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the *heart*, crying again and again :—"Where art Thou, Beloved?"

SHRINE after shrine does Mira visit as a wanderer and a pilgrim. To places of the holy ones Mira goes as a pilgrim to find escape, in the words of a great mystic, "from the flame of separation." "O Krishna! Thou art my All!" is the deepest yearning of her heart. She wants not the world's wealth, neither palace nor paradise. She has longing for Krishna alone.

Brindaban, at last! Significant is the word, "Brindaban." Brinda is the sacred basil (*tulsi*) tree, and "bana" means "forest." Brindaban is the home of the sacred *tulsi* tree. Situated on the right bank of the river Jamuna, in the Mathura District, Brindaban is dear to every lover of Krishna. There Krishna played on the flute and threw the spell of his pure, divine love on all who saw him and heard him. And there a thousand temples stand dedicated to "Govinda Deva,"—to Krishna, the Guardian of cows and the cattle. Krishna is, in Brindaban, remembered as the *Deva*, the Divine Guardian and Servant of the cow and the cattle.

Mira has put on the *gerua* cloth. Mira has crossed forests and mountains. Mira has washed herself in the waters of sacred rivers. Mira has touched the dust of many Krishna-shrines on the way.

At Brindaban, there lives a great *bhakta* of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu whose name is Jiv Goswami. Mira is anxious to have his *darshana* : and, standing at the Temple-gate, Mira sends a request to be permitted to see the Goswami. He sends a word :—"I never meet women!"

Mira sends an answer in the following words :—"O great one ! I thought Girdhara, Sri Krishna, was the only

Purusha (male) in Brindaban : and I thought everybody else was a woman in Brindaban. But now I know that Krishna has a compeer, that there is a second Krishna in Brindaban!"

Jiv Goswami is struck with Mira's answer. It goes right into his heart. He realises that Mira is no ordinary singer of Krishna. Mira, he understands, is a supreme *bhakta*. What Mira means is :—"I regard Krishna alone as the *Purusha* (male) : I see all others as *sakhis* (females)."

And Jiv Goswami quits his seat, quickly opens the gate of the Temple and, in great love, meets Mira.

With what love is Mira greeted by the people in Brindaban, as she moves along, crossing street after street! They come out of their houses and bow down to her in reverence. They gaze at her face and listen to the one word she utters again and again :—"Govinda! Govinda! Govinda!" In the simplest language, which is the language of love, she teaches them the great lesson of *bhakti*, the supreme lesson of self-surrender.

"Blessed is Mira," they say; "her touch sanctifies the soil made sacred by Krishna's contact and communion, in the long ago." Some say :—"Her songs bring back to us the ancient memory of *rasa-lila*." Some say :—"When she dances in ecstasy, we see Krishna again." Some say :—"We feel that Shyama is nigh to us as we sit at her feet and as we gaze at her holy face rapt in meditation." Some say :—"Wonderful is she! Once a queen, she comes to us today in the garb of a beggar,—a wanderer in the streets of Brindaban. Blessed, blessed be Mira!"

Little ones, the children of cowherds, come running to her and touch her feet and say :—"O blessed one! here is milk for thee. Drink and bless us!" Not a few, bowing to her in reverence, say :—"O holy one! sing again to us the ancient, forgotten song of the *gopis* of Brija."

And Mira gently, in deep humility, sings her one-word song :—"Govinda! Govinda! Girdhari ! Girdhara Nagara!" She sings, then weeps, then laughs, then falls down unconscious! Does she swoon or does she rest in the holy lap of her Beloved?

Every day of her stay at Brindaban is a day of joy in Krishna's adoration, a day of *kirtan* before the Image of Shyama. And everyday, she looks at the trees of Brindaban. And to every tree and every leaf and every flower, she says :—"Blessed art thou! Thou and I have been together, birth after birth!"

Mira rejoices in the thought that Krishna did, in the long ago, cast his glance on every lane in Brindaban. Putting on her feet the little bells and taking in her hands *kartala*, she sings as one who is love-intoxicated. She calls herself *prema-devani* (love-intoxicated). With tear-filled eyes, she does *arati* (worship) to Krishna,—tears flowing from her eyes profusely. And even when her eyes are shut, she sees the Beloved and cries, again and again :—"My Master!"

Mira sees Krishna everywhere. Every flower and every tree, every leaf and every stone is Krishna's. She, too, is his! For her, *samsara* (the world) has vanished in the one vision of Krishna. Yes,—the inner door of her heart is opened and she is filled with interior illumination. "Light! Light!" she cries, again and again. In a beautiful, little song, she sings thus :—

In mine eyes
And in the heart within me
Thou art!
Beloved, thou art!
And to thee I come
Radiant in thy colour divine!

And again—

Krishna! O Krishna!
Behold! The world is all asleep :
I keep awake!
In my heart is yearning
For thee, alone for thee!

I sit and weave
A garland of tears :
I count the stars :
And lo! the night is gone!

Beloved, meet me!
O meet me!
No more separation!
Krishna, my Life!
Krishna, my Communion!
Krishna, my Heaven!
Krishna, my All!

Thus doth Mira sing of Shyama. And singing of Him, she falls unconscious, she goes into ecstasy, again and again. Then, waking up, she cries out :—"Krishna! Krishna!"

In her *kirtan* and aspiration, in her wanderings from *kunja*(bower) to *kunja* in Brindaban, in the tears she sheds, in the little songs she sings, Mira adores Krishna as the Truth of her life.

Again and again, she feels happy in the thought that she has known Krishna, having renounced all arguments, controversies, discussions, debates. Krishna is to her a Reality, an immediate perception. And Krishna's knowledge is to her a revelation of God.

After a brief stay, Mira leaves Brindaban. Some say she goes back to her village, Merta, and stays there for a

short time. From Merta she comes to Dwarka.

On the sea-shore, in Kathiawar, did Krishna build Dwarka, Dyara-vati, the "City of many gates," in the long ago. And Krishna taught that "there be many gates to God, and by whatever gate My *bhaktas* come with love to worship Me, on that gate stand I to greet them."

With the dawn doth Mira see Dwarka, the Ever-blessed! It shineth in her eyes. Dim streets she sees afar. Each tree and leaf, each flower and wave doth know her. For Krishna, her Beloved, once did dwell in Dwarka and bless its birds and cows and gardens fair, and on the sea-shore did Krishna play on his magic flute, even as it rained day by day and night after night.

With love and reverence in her heart doth Mira stand on the sea-shore, rapt, intoxicate. And Mira gazes at the waves, then bursts into song after song. Before her and all around,—here, there, everywhere,—she sees Krishna, Krishna!

With what longing in her heart singeth Mira of her Beloved :—

I love thee, Shyama!
I love thee more than life!
My strength, my solace and my bliss
In thee alone I find,—
In thee and thy Holy Name,—
My sweetest one!

When all is dark,
Thy Name awakes in me a Light!
It burneth as a Flame
In my heart : day and night
It shines before me
As a Torch of Light,
Beautiful and bright!

Mira spends her time in the Sri Ranchore Temple, sacred to Sri Krishna. There she does *kirtan* to the glory of her Lord. A number of devout ladies join her. With these she builds a little group of devotees, her *bhakta-mandali*.

A tradition has it that, one day, Rana Vikramajit comes secretly from Chitor to meet her in Dwarka and implores her to return to Chitor, saying :—"Since the day you left the palace, Chitor has had to face many difficulties. And the people tell me :—'Our sufferings are due to the treatment given to Mira.' I come to ask you to forgive me. Bless me and return with me to Chitor!"

Mira repeatedly requests to be excused. The Rana returns alone, but sends a number of Brahmins to persuade her to come back to Chitor. They are wonderstruck at what they see. Mira is absorbed in her *kirtan*!

The Brahmins sit at her door, saying :—"O holy one! We cannot go without you. Nor can we eat anything, until you come back with us to Chitor!"

Mira feels it is a sin to let the Brahmins stay and starve. She says to them :—"Do let me have a little time : and let me go to the Temple to take leave of my Beloved and get His blessings before I go back with you to Chitor."

It is dusk: vanished is the warmth of daylight. Mira enters the Temple alone. In silence she stands before the Image of her Lord,—the Beloved. "More to me than life," she says, "art Thou, Beloved! In mine eyes and in my heart Thou art! Thou art!" And she sings:—

The Bread of my soul art thou!
The Strength of my heart art thou!
The Treasure of my life art thou!
Methinks, I hear thy Voice,
I hear the sound of thy Flute.

Sometimes I see thee

Coming quick from a grove,
Beautiful and bright!
And over thee I see
A Touch of Fire,
A Flame of Beauty!
And from the Flame doth come
A Voice: but I understand it not.
And I sob and cry:—
'O meet me, Master!'
No more separation!

Sometimes I see,
When all is dark,
That in the Heart within
Doth shine a Light, thy Light!
And then I cry:—
'I have seen
What I have seen!'
And again I cry:—
'Holy! Holy! Holy!
The Holy One have I seen!'

And a Voice I hear again:
It speaketh to my heart:—
'Open to Me,
For I come quickly!'
I open! But thou art gone!

And Mira weeps. O, the tears! And Mira sings again:—

In thee, Beloved, is Light:
And the Light doth shine
In darkness of the world,
And the world knows it not!

O Light! Eternal Light!

With a million eyes dost thou
Fill all worlds, all stars and suns

With a mercy immeasurable
Dost thou shine on me,—
A pilgrim through endless space
To thy Holy Shrine!

Then, with tear-touched eyes, doth Mira sing again:—

Beloved!
Thy Light doth shine
On herb and grass,
On flower and fruit,
On drops of dew,
On beauty of the clouds,
On running streams,
On falling rains,
On winds and wheeling fires,
On thorns and roses soft,
On every birth
And every silence
Of night and sleep!

Then, in utter devotion, she sings again:—

O come thou quick!
For, lo! I faint for thee!
Beloved!
Come! Come! Come!
O Light of lights!

Mira is adoring her Beloved within closed doors. The Temple-room is fragrant with the fragrance of Him who is the Purest of the Pure. Mira is dancing in the presence of her Beloved.

Again and again, she exclaims:—"O Thou, the Treasure

of my heart! O Thou, the Breath of my breath!"

It is evening. Mira is doing *arati* to her Lord.

The evening hours slip, one by one, into the hour of the midnight.

Then Mira holds out her arms to embrace Krishna's Image. And the story has it that the Image stretches forth Its arms to greet her!

Mira falls down unconscious. A stream of tears is flowing from her eyes. Mira is mingled with her Beloved, "Madhava." No separation now! Mira is become one with the Holy One who is in All!

And the Temple is filled with a strange, mysterious light such as seldom was on earth or sea.

THE SCHOLAR WHO STARVED BUT WOULD NOT BEG

We read of renowned sages in ancient India,—of great Teachers such as Aruni, Yagnavalkya, Svetaketu and Sandilya. Well-known was the centre of education associated with the name of Sandipa. He was a sage. To him came a number of pupils to receive training at his *asrama*. Three of his pupils were Balarama, Krishna and Sudama. All the three became well-known in the maturity of their manhood.

Balarama and Krishna were brothers. They were princes by birth. Sudama was poor, but he belonged to a family of culture. Sudama is known, also, as "Kuchela": the word means "one clad in tattered garments." Indeed, Sudama was very poor: yet was he one of the best students of the *asrama* and was very dear to Rishi Sandipa.

Dear, too, was Sudama to Krishna. The two liked each other at the very first meeting. Sudama was child-like and Krishna, himself, was a lover of the simple and child-like. Sudama became a Krishna-*bhakta*. In the depth of his poverty, Sudama had comfort in the thought:—"No riches of the world do I claim : yet am I rich beyond measure. For Krishna is my wealth and Krishna is my food and shelter, and Krishna's love is my home. In Krishna is my Immortal Joy!"

One day, when Krishna and Sudama have recited the "Gayatri" and finished their morning worship saluting the Sun,—a symbol of *Shakti*, the Cosmic Energy,—they are asked by their Teacher (Guru), Sandipa, to go to the

forest to fetch firewood.

"As the Guru orders," say both. And they enter the forest and cut down trees. Then, with faggots on their heads, they move homewards.

They have hardly moved a short distance when they find a storm is raging. The wind blows strong : the clouds gather in the sky : dense darkness is around them. but they are unafraid. The rains fall in torrents : the lightnings flash : the thunder rolls. The storm continues to blow and uproots the trees. And now is heard the roaring of the tiger and the bear. Sudama is frightened.

"Krishna! Krishna!" cries Sudama.

Krishna says:—"Do not fear! One is near who never fails!"

Sudama says:—"Krishna! look at the rains and the storms! The rains descend in torrents : the storms blow fiercer! Krishna! it is difficult, it is impossible, to move further. Is there no place where we may find shelter?"

"Be not afraid, Sudama!" says Krishna. "Here is a big banyan tree. Why not seek shelter under its sheltering branches?"

"Yes, yes," cries Sudama. "There let us repair for shelter until the storm abates."

Krishna and Sudama seek shelter under the branches of the banyan tree. The storm continues for sometime : and when it abates, the night is advanced. In darkness, they press onward, anxious to return to the *asrama*.

They move on. The storm is over. But they find they have lost the path. They search hard but cannot find the way out of the forest.

Sudama says :—"Krishna! Tired am I and darkness is around us. I can no further walk. We are fated to spend the night in the forest."

Sudama is pale with fright.

KRISHNA. Brother! Fear not! It seems to be the Will of

the Highest that we spend the night in the forest. Let us be grateful that the storm is over. The night, too, will be over and a new day will dawn and we shall see the light again!

SUDAMA. Krishna! draw nigh to me. 'Tis true I fear, for the darkness around us is heavy. And we are fated to spend the night here. It may be that we shall face the wild animals of the forest.

KRISHNA. Brother! all will yet be well!

SUDAMA. Krishna! think of the storm! It suddenly burst on us. The whirlwind, we thought, was sweeping us on to the abyss.

KRISHNA. Yes, furious was the wind, and clouds gathered thick in the sky. The sun was all concealed: and dense darkness fell upon us! But we must not let fear fall on us! Let us learn to face danger and storm in life.

SUDAMA. Krishna! Didn't you hear the bear and the tiger roaring, roaring midst torrents of rain? And the storm continued for hours together!

KRISHNA. Yes, Sudama! But the Great Power that guides is ever gracious. And forget not that He comes, also, in the terrible rain,— in the terrible storm! And, Sudama! what a mercy that we could find a big banyan tree! Beneath its branches we found a shelter. How gracious is God! Let us, Sudama! in this night of darkness, pray to Him for help.

SUDAMA. Krishna! O Krishna! Is not life a strange adventure?

KRISHNA. Yes. But never lose heart, Sudama! Life's message is:—Be brave! And the call of life is:—Have faith! God is our shield in the dark and the storm. And never forget that storm gives meaning to life. Never forget that he is truly a man who never loseth hope.

Such men have been. Think of Rama! He went in

Sita's search, with faith and courage in his heart. And this man, this heroic man,—Rama,—has changed the character of centuries. Out of him hath flowed a mighty force which hath left its mark on Bharata's history,—making it, verily, a Scripture of the Race.

SUDAMA. Yes, Krishna! How stormy was the wind! And then how calm was the wind when the storm had passed away!

KRISHNA. Rama, too, went through the storm. Yet he himself was so deeply calm. The Eternal in him lay deeply quiet,—until Ravana challenged him. The Eternal, then, awoke on Lanka's battlefield. This, Sudama, is the message of the storm:—

Be brave : shirk not!
Shrink not! Uttishta!
Stand up with faith in Him who leads us,—
Out of storm into calm,
Out of darkness into Light!

Never forget, Sudama! evil, impure forces arise, again and again, But the Ganges of God,—the purifying force of His Grace,—flows on for ever!

THE rainy season is over. And one bright morn, Krishna and Sudama move out for a long walk.

"Krishna!" says Sudama; "strong of soul art thou: but something sits heavy on my heart. May I say?"

KRISHNA. Sudama dear! Speak! Thy elder brother am I.

SUDAMA. Krishna! Here we have stayed together in the *asrama* : and the time is nigh when we must part. And then ?

KRISHNA. Sudama! Here we have stayed together as brothers. And brothers travel together in the larger *asrama* of life. Is not our goal one?

SUDAMA. Krishna! My need is you,—in life!

KRISHNA. Yes,—in the sphere of work, our urgent need is,—comradeship. The architect needs builders: I need you!

SUDAMA. Krishna! You know how I think of you. You are the destined architect of Bharata. May I be a stone in the building you will build!

KRISHNA. Wherever you be in life, Sudama! may I love you still as near to me as though you and I never parted.

SUDAMA. So may it be!

KRISHNA. So may it be! No separation, Sudama! In the communion of hearts is the secret of happiness.

SUDAMA. I know not where I may have to wander on the path of life. If I stray, Krishna! forget me not! But come to me or call me where you be! What am I without you?

KRISHNA. Sudama! May we do nothing to break the link! Wherever you be, bless me!

SUDAMA. Krishna! If at any time I become a shipwrecked sailor, may I be stranded at your door!

KRISHNA. Books we have read together: but they come to naught without the Heart. And the Heart is the Temple of Love where you and I are one! In all struggles and situations of life, may you never forget that Krishna, wherever he be, awaits you with open arms! For Krishna's heart is ever radiant with love!

SUDAMA. But, Krishna! sometimes a cloud crosses my mind and I say to myself:—Friends once united may drift apart!

KRISHNA. Treasure the smile on my lips as richer than all the silver and gold of the Earth! Wherever you be, Sudama! remember the Eternal in my eyes is gazing at you! In that gaze is my heart's longing that lives,—the longing for you! Believe me, Sudama! you are dear to me! Let nothing rob you of your faith in me!

In course of time, Krishna, Balarama and Sudama finish their education in the *asrama*. The day arrives when they take leave of their great Teacher, Sandipa. He is truly great. He is a scholar. He is a seer,—a Rishi. He is simple. His heart is radiant with the light of compassion and love.

Krishna, Balarama and Sudama fall at the feet of Sandipa and his wife. Tears fill their eyes, for the time is come to part. Sandipa blesses them, saying :—

"May you be worthy of your *asrama* in the larger *asrama* of life!

"May you be instruments of Bharata's divine destiny in the service of Her Rishis and Saints!

"May you behave as men and see that you do nothing to break the thread of your race!

"May you never forget that there is no Religion higher than Truth, Compassion and Love!"

And Sandipa's wife quietly says :—"*Tathastu*!" "Be it so!"

Then all the three,—Balarama, Krishna and Sudama,—take leave of their fellow-students and of the cows and deer and other animals and birds belonging to the *asrama* and, bowing to them all, ask them to bless them.

Krishna goes to Mathura and, in due course, builds the new city of Dwarka, leading his people to a high destiny as their Prince, their Guardian and their Teacher. Sudama goes to a village and marries a girl, poor but rich in qualities of character and devotion to God and to Sudama.

Both Sudama and his wife are lovers of the simple life. They eschew luxuries. They complain not of their poverty. For in their hearts is love of God and love for Krishna. Sudama often speaks to his wife of Krishna : and Krishna speaks to Rukmini of his friend, Sudama.

Sudama's difficulties increase. He does not earn enough to take care of his wife and two children. But he has faith in

God and he says, again and again :—"Better starve than beg!"

The hour of the night is advanced. Sudama, his wife and children have starved. She tells him :—"My lord! why not go to Dwarka? You and Krishna were fellow-students in the *asrama* of Rishi Sandipa. He will surely help."

"Yes," says Sudama; "we were like brothers in the *asrama*. I am sure he will help me in this hour of need. And he will help me without my asking him for help. Krishna is not an ordinary mortal. And, you know, I worship him in my heart, every day!"

The next morn, Sudama prepares to start for Dwarka. His wife tells him :—"My lord! you must not go to Krishna with empty hands. We have a small quantity of parched rice in the house."

Sudama says :—"This shall I offer him as my gift,—an humble gift,—but he knows with what love and reverence I shall place it at his lotus-feet."

In worn and threadbare clothes, Sudama starts for Dwarka and he ties a few parched grains of rice in his upper cloth as his love-offering to Krishna. Two days and more he moves on. Tired and travel-tainted, he finds himself, at last, before the gates of a city.

"It must be Dwarka," he exclaims in joy. He moves on! He walks his way through the crowded streets of Dwarka. He comes, at last, to the royal palace, where lives Sri Krishna. He stands at the front gate. There stands a guard on duty. He says :—"Who are you? Whom do you desire to meet?"

Sudama says :—"A poor man am I. Sudama is my name. Krishna is my Friend : and I desire to meet him. This be my request to thee, O thou, the keeper of the gate! Meet the Gracious One and tell him that at the royal gate

stands Sudama!"

The gate-keeper is confounded. Is this Brahmin, Sudama, in his senses? He calls Krishna his "Friend"! And he is almost naked: in tattered rags is he clothed.

The gate-keeper reflects, then says to himself:—"My Lord Krishna is, verily, a Friend of the poor. Does he not say Daridra Narayana is the name the dearest to him?"

With all courtesy, the gate-keeper talks to Sudama:—"Sir! be seated here till I return. I take your message my Master!"

Seeing Sri Krishna in his royal seat, the gate-keeper, with folded hands and bowing low in reverence, saith:—"My Lord! I know not whence he cometh: he gives not the name of his village. His clothes are torn: his body is covered with dust. He stands at the palace-gate and asks:—'Where is the palace of the Lord?' And giving his name as Sudama, says:—'Krishna is my Friend!'"

"Sudama!" cries Krishna. He speaks no more. He runs with naked feet,—runs to the gate of the palace where Sudama stands. Krishna falls at Sudama's feet. Krishna's eyes are become a fountain of tears. Krishna and Sudama embrace each other and look at each other with eyes raining tears. And the people who stand at the gate see the marvellous sight and are in wonder lost!

Sudama says to himself:—"Do I dream?" No! Sudama knows that the friend of his *asrama*-days stands before him.

Krishna looks at Sudama's feet, again and again. And every time Krishna beholds the broken feet, he weeps!

Then speaks Krishna to Sudama:—"O Friend of my *asrama* days! Long have you been absent. Today is a blessed day! For today you come to my city and my palace. What a joy to see you again! What a joy to remember the old days when we lived together in Blessed Sandipa's *asrama*! What a joy! What a joy!"

And Krishna embraces Sudama again and lets his feet touch the Body Divine. In this posture remains Krishna with his friend, Sudama. After a long time comes Udhava, whom Krishna loves, saying :—"Master! Master!" Krishna awakes! Krishna comes to his earth consciousness. Krishna takes Sudama by the hand and leads him into the Inner Hall.

Sudama is overcome with emotion. His heart is full. He is unable to speak a word to Krishna.

Then Krishna takes a pail of water in his hands and washes Sudama's feet, saying :—"Verily, I am blessed!"

Rukmini, Krishna's wife, looks on,—amazed,—then fans Sudama, and Krishna garlands him with fragrant flowers.

Krishna says :—"Sudama! you have not forgotten the days we spent together in Sandipa's *asrama*."

SUDAMA. Krishna! Blessed were the days we spent together in the *asrama*,—in service of the Guru and in communion with the Forest.

KRISHNA. How are you now?

SUDAMA. Well enough! At Sandipa's feet I received that true education which hath eliminated craving, and filled me with the joy of wisdom. And I feel so happy to see you again. In your lotus-feet I see the Image of the Eternal.

KRISHNA. And how is your wife?

SUDAMA. She, too, is well.

KRISHNA. And your children?

SUDAMA. Krishna! God has been very kind to me. He has given me two children. Both are in good health : and both are growing mentally and in the beauty of character. Dear to both are the Rishis and the blessed Name of Krishna.

KRISHNA. Happy am I to hear it all. Children are God's *rupas* (images), and children are a pledge to parents

of God's love.

Turning, then, to Rukmini, Krishna says :—

"Rukmini! this is Sudama. Many call him Kuchela, the 'poor one.' He is one of my dearest friends. We were both pupils of Rishi Sandipa. He is a great seer, as my friend, Sudama, is a great scholar. Gentle is he and humble and, everyday, he worships God : and he remembers me : and Rama's Name is ever on his lips.

"Rukmini! He meets me after many years of separation. Serve him and get his blessings."

RUKMINI. My Lord! I shall do as you desire. I shall serve Sudama : and may I have his blessings! Long may this day be retained in my recollections!

KRISHNA. Rukmini! tired is Sudama : for he has travelled much. A bath will refresh him.

Sudama has a bath, accordingly, and Sudama wears new clothes and looks beautiful after the bath.

The next day, Krishna takes Sudama to the spacious garden of the palace. The two friends sit together and talk of many things drawn from their experiences.

KRISHNA. Do you remember the terrible storm we faced on the day we were returning in the evening from the forest, carrying wood for our Guru, Sandipa?

SUDAMA. How could I forget that storm and the lesson of that storm? I well remember we prayed to God to save us : were not our lives in danger? On that stormy night, too, we learnt to be brave and strong in the face of danger and death!

KRISHNA. But, Sudama! what is that tied up in a knot at one end of your upper cloth?

SUDAMA (embarassed). Krishna! Krishna!

KRISHNA. Sudama! I understand. It is the gift you have so kindly brought me. Be not embarassed, brother! The value of a gift lies not in the price you pay for it but in the

love which inspires the heart. It may be the petal of a flower : it may be the leaf of a tree : it may be a little fruit: it may be a cup of water. Sudama! if it is given by a heart pure and lowly, if it is offered in love, it is richly blessed. Blessings on you, bother!

Then Krishna opens the knot of the little piece of cloth, and finds in it parched rice. He eats it : his eyes sparkle!

Krishna says :—"Sudama! What a beautiful gift! What a joy to eat the parched rice you have given me! I never tasted anything so delicious! O brother! it is an offering of a pure and loving heart. Blessings on you!"

SUDAMA. An humble offering, this, of an humble heart. Blessed am I, Krishna! that you accept it.

KRISHNA. I shall not ask you to tell me how life has fared with you, Sudama!

SUDAMA. You know better than I, Krishna! There is peace in my heart : for, every day, I have thought of you, remembered you, and touched your lotus-image in my heart.

Sudama gazes at Krishna's Face in love. And as the Muslim seer, Abbas Effendi, saith :—"All besides Love is but words." Sudama holds and beholds Krishna in his heart.

KRISHNA. Tell me, Sudama! how fares the world?

SUDAMA. What may I say? Hundreds go hungry and dwell in broken huts. Food and clothing are denied them. And from their hearts the cry goes forth :—"Lord! to whom shall we go? Where is the True Man, the New Man,—the Man Divine?" And yet, I know, Krishna! you are the New Man, the Man Divine! You are *Daridra Narayana*! You are a servant of the poor and lowly.

And not for a moment have I coveted silver and gold. But, every day, have I remembered you and your Name, Krishna! in the temple of my heart.

And when, yesterday, on meeting me, Krishna! you washed my feet and wiped them with a piece of cloth, I said to myself :—"Verily, Krishna! though you come from God, you are a servant of the poor and lowly. With love and humility in your heart you come to us all who are poor, and I fain would die for you!"

SUDAMA is shy. He has decided, after a few days' stay, to depart for his village. Krishna does not wish that Sudama should leave Dwarka so soon.

Sudama says to Krishna :—"My Friend, my Brother, my Lord! I have stayed in Dwarka and thou hast blessed me richly. I needs must start for my village tomorrow. I come to get thy leave. Be pleased to grant my prayer.

"Of the Eternal One art thou! And thou dost dwell in my heart. Thou dost fill my thoughts : thou dost inspire my love. And everyday I do *arati* to thee in the hidden temple of my heart!

"How may I show forth my gratitude for thy loving kindness to me? I give thee the homage of a loving, reverent heart!

"Bless me that I may meditate on thee in my heart for ever! Bless me that I may give thee the service of my love for ever! Bless me that I may do my duties in life with love and humility for ever!

"Bless me that I may live in unity with thee and in loving fellowship with thee for ever!

"Bless me and mine for ever! Bless me that I may serve, yet in all work and service be ever detached : and so in detachment find the freedom of my soul!

"And teach me to be true and brave and holy and loving and compassionate for ever!

"Earthly friends may leave us : but thou, I know, wilt

never forget and never forsake thy *bhaktas*, Lord!

"To thee I bow as thy *bhakta* and ask this alone of thee,—that thou wilt bless me for ever! In this birth and in birth after birth, may I thy servant be for ever!"

And Krishna's eyes are touched with tears. Krishna says to Sudama :—"Dear friend and brother! All that thou dost ask of me, I grant thee! Indeed, it is this very moment thine!

"Since thou must to thy village return, I shall not keep thee here! And tomorrow will everything be ready for thy departure, friend!

"Beloved brother of my heart art thou, Sudama! I love thee more than thou mayst ever know! Believe me, thou and thine are for ever mine!

"Wealth is a blessing only when it is shared in love. Nor is compulsory poverty a blessing.

"How happy am I thou hast sought, Sudama! the Kingdom of Eternal Love! And all things are thine!

"The Name Eternal hast thou worshipped in the heart within and thou shalt not want anything, beloved brother!

"Thy pure, noble life hath taught me much! 'Tis I should ask thy blessings, brother of my Heart!"

And Sri Krishna sent Sudama, the next day, to his village in a chariot. And a devotee of Krishna accompanied Sudama in the chariot. Seven hours it took to reach the village, when Sudama had walked over seventy hours to reach Dwarka.

And Sudama never was in want again. Krishna gave one more proof that he was the Friend of the poor,—*Daridra Narayana*,—and that a Prince in the Kingdom of God was, also, a Servant of the lowly and the heavy-laden,—a Servant of Man.

A MUSLIM VAISHNAVA

One of the great *bhaktas* (devotees) of Sri Krishna, in Sri Chaitanya's days, was a Muslim who adopted a Hindu name and is known, in Vaishnava literature, as Hari Das.

The Muslims of Navadwipa were deeply offended with Hari Das, for he was devoted to Sri Chaitanya. The Muslims carried their complaint to the *Kazi*,—the Muslim magistrate of Nadia. The *Kazi* issued an order, saying :– "Take this man, Hari Das, this renegade to the Muslim Faith, to the market of the town and there beat him hard and flog him until he falls unconscious and is dead."

Hari Das was taken to the market-place. Blow after blow fell on this servant of God. He fell down, unconscious, for sometime. The Muslims thought Hari Das was dead. They took up his body and threw it in the waters of the Ganges. After sometime, Hari Das revived and swam back to the shore. Then Hari Das sang aloud the song of which he was very fond, the *kirtan*-song :—"*Hari bol! Hari bol!*"

Singing thus, Hari Das came back to his cottage. The Muslims were frightened. "A miracle has happened," they said. "Hari Das was dead : Hari Das has arisen!"

Some Muslims went to the cottage and asked him to forgive them all. Hari Das continued to sing, and then fell into a swoon. After sometime he woke up. The very first words he uttered on waking up were :—"I am very happy. How sweet it is to suffer for Krishna's sake!"

Significant words these. Yes,—the man who comes from the heights of contemplation to the plains of active life and, mingling with men, tries to serve them, suffers much, for he enters into conflict with many. But, like Hari Das, he may well say :—"I am very happy. How sweet

it is to suffer for the sake of my Master!"

Hari Das went to Puri when he learnt that his Master,—Chaitanya Mahaprabhu,—was there. The songs and *kirtans* of Hari Das drew crowds of men to Sri Chaitanya and to the feet of Sri Krishna. Every day, Sri Chaitanya sent meals to Hari Das. And again and again, Sri Chaitanya went to see him in his cottage. Embracing him, one day, Sri Chaitanya said :—"You are a *bhakta* and so greater than a Brahmin."

Sri Chaitanya loved Hari Das and regarded him as more than his brother. He called him "Thakur." The word means "one who should be adored," the "adorable one."

Puri, the town sacred to "Jagannath,"—the "Lord of the worlds,"—never allowed, before Chaitanya's advent, any Muslim to enter the grounds of the Temple. But Sri Chaitanya's gentle influence succeeded in providing Hari Das with a residence inside the town, near the spot where Sri Chaitanya himself lived.

Over and over again, Chaitanya declared, in the sacred town of Puri, that the true excellence of a man was not his caste but his *bhakti*. And Chaitanya said :—"Hari Das is the very picture of *bhakti*."

HARI Das was becoming old, weak, infirm. It was Hari Das' habit to recite the Name of "Hari" three lacs of times, every day. But becoming old, Hari Das was no longer equal to the task. His hands trembled, and every day sadness grew upon him. For he no longer could repeat the Name of the Lord so often.

One day, Sri Chaitanya gets the news that Hari Das is ill. Quickly, the Master comes to Hari Das' cottage.

"Are you not well?" asks the Master.

Hari Das says :—"It is no illness of the body I suffer from.

My illness is of the spirit within."

Sri Chaitanya asks :—"What is troubling your spirit, beloved Hari Das?"

Hari Das says :—"My Master! I feel in my heart that you are quickly leaving us all. I feel the call is come to me to depart. Let me depart in peace."

Sri Chaitanya smiles and says :—"So be it, Hari Das! Krishna is very kind. He will grant what you ask."

Next day, Chaitanya comes, with a few of his disciples, to the Garden surrounding Hari Das' cottage. Hari Das salutes them all and says :—"Master! sit not afar! Sit in front of me!"

And Sri Chaitanya, drawing near and blessing Hari Das, sits in front of him. Hari Das then says, looking with his loving eyes into the Master's mystic eyes :—"Sri Krishna Chaitanya! Sri Krishna Chaitanya! Sri Krishna Chaitanya!" Saying this thrice, Hari Das leaves his body!

Sri Chaitanya bows to the dead body of Hari Das, invokes Hari Das' blessings, then says to all who are present :—"Let us have *kirtan*. Let us sing the Name of God."

They all join in the *kirtan*, singing *Hari Nama*. All praise the Lord. And Sri Chaitanya dances in gratitude to Sri Krishna. Then the Master says :—"Let us take the body of our beloved to the sea-shore."

There Sri Chaitanya, with his own hands, buries the body of Hari Das.

Then, Sri Chaitanya goes from shop to shop, saying to every shopkeeper :—"I come, today, as a beggar. I beg of you food. Give me what you can! For we must celebrate the passing of Hari Das by feeding the poor."

The call goes forth to the poor to come and eat in the Temple Garden and bless the blessed one,—Hari Das.

His tomb may still be seen at Puri : and it is still a place of pilgrimage to many Hindu seekers of Krishna.

A SINGER OF RAMA-NAMA

SPEAKING to his disciples, one day, Jesus said :—"Behold the lilies of the field! They toil not, nor do they spin. Yet, not Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of them!" In these words did Jesus give his teaching to his disciples. "Renounce your all to God," he taught.

This has been the secret of the teaching of the great saints of India, century after century. One of them was the great mystic of the sixteenth century, whom we remember as Malook. In one of his hymns, Malook says :—

पंछी करै न काम
Behold the birds! They toil not!

And then he adds :—

सब के दाता राम
God is the Giver unto all!

The teaching of this Indian Saint may be summed up in these few words :—"Renounce all and rest in God!" It is a teaching of great practical value to us, today.

The story of this Saint's life may be briefly told. He was born, in 1574, in a village called Kara. It was a difficult period in India's history. Aurangzeb was the Moghul emperor of India. Hindus lived in fear and trembling. Hindu temples were razed to the ground. In the biggest centre of Hindu culture,—Banaras,—the biggest temple was, by order of Aurangzeb, pulled down, and on the spot was built a mosque. But Malook lived a life of fearlessness. Malook lived in God. Malook breathed out his love to all.

Aurangzeb was constrained to honour this great Hindu Saint of India. Aurangzeb had imposed a special tax,—

the *jazia* tax,—on Hindus in different parts of the country. But Aurangzeb said :—"The village Kara shall be exempt from paying the *jazia* tax, for Kara is consecrated by the presence of Malook Das." And one of the generals of Aurangzeb, named Fateh Khan, became a devoted disciple of this Saint.

Malook is, from the beginning of his days, drawn to devotees of God and brothers of the poor,—called *bhaktas* and *sadhus*. One day, a band of *sadhus* enters his house seeking hospitality. Malook is a poor man : but he serves the *sadhus*, feeds them, spending the last pie in his possession.

Yet another story is told us about Malook. He is a young man. He is in great need : he wants money to buy bread for the poor. And he goes to the bazar to sell his blanket to provide for poor men. He returns from the bazar. His wife tells him :—"Someone came here in your absence and has left this packet for you."

"Who was he?" Malook asks.

The wife says :—"He wore the dress of a labourer!"

"O yes," says Malook; "my Beloved, my Leader,—Krishna,—is, indeed, a *mazdoor*, a labourer,—the Friend of the poor, *Daridra Narayana*."

Malook opens the little packet left for him. In the packet he finds a piece of gold. Malook sells this, too, and spends it in the service of the poor.

Wonderful was his faith in Krishna and in *Hari-Nama* (Name of God). Day by day, he went on singing the Name of the Lord.

His influence grew with the passing of years. He was a hundred and eight years old when he passed away. There came a time when people looked up to him with reverence and attributed to him a number of "miracles." But he always said :—"The greatest miracle is my Master." If famine entered an area, they would call him, saying :—"O

Saint of God! come and stay here for some days, and we shall have rains and famine will disappear."

On one occasion, we are told, a boat was sinking in the waters : and they ran up to him and brought him to the spot. And he stood on the river-bank, and he looked at the boat in the waters. What was there is his looks? Quietly he stood on the river-bank and, in silence, with folded hands, he prayed to his Master : and the boat was saved!

Over and over again, they would call him to visit the sick ones, the dying ones. And people believed that the water they drank out of his hands had a healing touch. And many on their death-bed sent for him and found consolation in the presence and words of this holy man.

He had surrendered his all to his Master. He wrote a little book called *Gnana-bodha* ("Illumination"). The central message of this book is :—"Awake! Awake, and surrender your all to the Master."

There are centres in India which still keep alive the memory of this true man of renunciation, this *bhakta* of the Lord, this holy man who gave his all to his Master. There are centres where religious meetings (*satsang*) are held in his name,—centres in Allahabad, Jaipur, Gujrat and Patna. A few centres there are even in Nepal and in far-off Afghanistan.

Malook Das was a *bhakta* (devotee) of *Rama-Nama*. In one of his hymns, he says :—

Life is a Boat.
Leave the Boat in the Hands of the Master
And let it float on!
Be unafraid :
Think not of the morrow !
Safe is the Boat in the Hands of the Lord:
The Boat will reach the Shore.

In another hymn, Malook gives the teaching that the true *bhakta* is a bride of the Lord. Listen to his words:—

Be His bride!
He will not leave you:
He will give you all you need!
Only surrender your action,
Your entire life, to your Spouse.
Ever gracious is He!
He never leaveth His bride in the lurch!

Malook taught, over and over again, that life is blessed in the measure in which it is dedicated to *Hari-Nama* (the Sacred Name). In one of his beautiful hymns, he says:—

Blessed, blessed is the bride,
Who ever abides in her Spouse,—Rama!

As the years pass, the longing grows in his heart to see God. This is what he says in one of his songs.—

My heart doth long
For a vision of Thy Face!
Alone I long for Thee,
Every moment of my life.
O listen to me, Master of Mercy!

Intoxicated am I,
For I have drunk of Thy Cup,
And I have forgotten my body,
I have renounced my all.
My heart is in Thee absorbed.

All places of pilgrimage have I seen
In the heart within me.
I have met the Master:
Blessed am I!

Yet another note in his teaching is his emphasis on *Nama*. "*Nama, Nama, Nama,*" he cries, again and again, "is my all-in-all!" What a cry of the soul in the following words taken from one of Malook's songs!

Dearer to me than my life is my Rama, is Nama.
His Name alone I adore : I know no other love.

He, also, urges that *Nama* (the Name Divine) must be adored in reverent silence. "Don't be ostentatious," he says, "in singing the Name of the Lord." Malook speaks, again and again, of *gupta japa*, "secret meditation," "hidden meditation." Listen to the following words of this Saint :—

I meditate on the Nama :
But I have no use for malha (rosary).
I sing Rama, but with the voice
Of Silence in my tongue.

I sing of my Master:
Ah! He singeth in me.
My Lord remembereth me!
My Master blesseth me in His mercy!

Restfully I sit in silence.
Restfully I gaze and gaze.
At the beauty of the Beloved!

Yes,—in these few words does the Saint indicate the secret of true prayer, true meditation (*smaran*). In silence let me realise Him, knowing that He, my Lord, thinketh of me, that He, my Master, blesseth me. On Him let me meditate! May I not in reverence add that He, also, meditates,—on all His *bhaktas* and servants of the Sacred Name?

A SECOND BUDDHA

Who was Narottama? I sometimes think of him as a "Second Buddha."

Narottama recalls repeatedly the holy figure of the Buddha. Narottama was the son of a Raja,—a prince who renounced his palace and become a *fakir* (mendicant) for the sake of the Lord.

Jesus asked the young ruler to give away his wealth to the poor if he would be a true disciple. The young ruler, we are told, never came back to Jesus! Not so Narottama. He gave his wealth to the poor and followed Krishna.

Narottama's father was a Raja and had extensive lands in the district of Rajasthan. When Narottama was born, the whole town rejoiced! There were festivals for eight days and eight nights, for at last a son and heir was born to the Raja.

Narottama was hardly fourteen years of age when he realised that richer than all the wealth of all the worlds was the service of Krishna. From the lips of his teacher, Krishna Das, Narottama heard the story of Chaitanya's life. "Let me be," said Narottama, "like Chaitanya. He renounced. Let me renounce, too!" Narottama's heart was ravished by the beauty of renunciation.

Chaitanya sang *Hari Nama*,—the Name of Krishna. "Who was Krishna?" young Narottama asked. "Krishna," he was told, "was the Spirit of Love Divine!" "Let me, too," Narottama said, "sing the Name and be dedicated to Krishna!"

Krishna and Chaitanya, *kirtan* and *Krishna-seva*,—Narottama meditated on them in his heart. In Krishna and Chaitanya, Narottama beheld the beauty of the Infinite

One day, Narottama saw the River Padma : in its waters was reflected the beauty of the moon. He stood on the river-

bank,—stood and gazed on the waters and was filled with unspeakable joy. Then, suddenly, he had a "vision." A voice inexpressibly sweet was calling him from the deep:—

Narottama!
Come unto Me, My child!
This world is in tragedy and tears:
This world is not for you!
Narottama, My child!
Come unto Me

Narottama heard these words : he burst into tears : he fell unconscious on the ground. Several hours passed. Narottama lay unconscious on the river-bank. His father and mother searched his rooms in the palace, one by one. Where was Narottama?

They found him on the river-bank,—unconscious. They restored him, at last, to consciousness. Narottama opened his eyes. There was astonishment in his looks. With wonder-filled eyes he looked around. He had seen : and now he wondered! He had a glimpse of the Krishna-world. And opening his eyes, he said:—"The palace is not the place for me!"

Narottama fell down unconscious again. After a while, he woke up and cried:—"Krishna! Krishna! My Master and Saviour! Leave me not! I have surrendered myself to Thee! In Thy mercy accept me!"

After a while, Narottama woke up again, and he shone more glorious than the sun in the sky. From head to foot, Narottama shone as gold doth shine when, thrice-refined, it passeth through fire. I recall the words of Jesus:—"When he that seeketh finds, he shall be astonished : and astonished, he shall reach the Kingdom!" There was wonder in Narottama's eyes.

Narottama's father consulted a competent doctor. "Spare

not anything : prepare what medicines you will. Spend money : get all possible assistance. Examine dear Narottama carefully. Cure his malady."

The doctor prescribed a medicine. It was prepared and brought to Narottama. He said to his father :— "Revered one! you are very kind. If you will kindly tell me how this medicine is prepared, my doubts may be at rest."

The father said:—"My child! the flesh of a fox is in this medicine."

Narottama said:—"Father! I would rather die than see that an animal is killed to cure me!"

So other medicines were given to Narottama. None was of any avail. The "vision" came to Narottama, again and again, and a voice, too. It said:—

Narottama! Narottama!
Come unto Me, My child!

Narottama heard the words : how sweet they were! Narottama wept for joy. But his heart was sad. He said:– "When shall I be free to go to the Vaishnava Community? This world is not for me."

Gaur was then the capital of Bengal. A rich landlord at Gaur invited Narottama to spend a few days with him at Gaur. A large number of horsemen and other attendants accompanied Narottama to Gaur. On the way, Narottama managed to escape. He ran and ran, until he reached Rajghat, near Banaras. His foot was blistered : he could no longer walk. He sat under a tree. For two days he had no food. On the third day, he had a "vision" again. It stirred him! It was the vision of a beautiful Boy. Who was he? Out of the vision came a voice,—sweet as a flute-song. The voice said to him :—

Narottama! Narottama!

Foot-sore and fatigued are you, My child!
You seek Me, forsaking the world!
I cannot forsake you! Here is a cup of milk!
Drink it, Narottama! Drink and be strong, again!

Narottama drank the milk and was filled with new strength. Narottama sat underneath the tree. Narottama was lost in meditation. Coming out of it, he opened his eyes and cried:—"Krishna! O Krishna!"

In a few minutes, he saw five men drawing near.

"Who are you?" Narottama asked.

"We are five," they answered. "And we are merchants. We go to Mathura via Allahabad. Who are you?"

Narottama said:—"I am a wandering boy: and I love Krishna. May I accompany you? How far do you go?"

"Beyond Mathura we do not go," the merchants said. "And you?"

"I go to Brindaban : I long to serve Krishna!"

Then Narottama told them of Sri Chaitanya. "In him," Narottama said, "Krishna came again to save humanity."

And Narottama spoke of the Love which flowed in the life of Chaitanya and made his life holy. Of his own life, Narottama said nothing. And the merchants knew not that Narottama was the son of a millionaire.

From Mathura, Narottama came to Brindaban. He kissed the ground of Brindaban as holy. To none did he say who he was. At Brindaban, he ate once a day. A temple supplied him meals *gratis*.

Near the temple was a little house : in it lived Lokanath. He had known Chaitanya. Lokanath had travelled with Chaitanya to several towns and villages. Narottama swept with a broom the courtyard of Lokanath, every day : and Lokanath wondered who did the work, every day! Lokanath caught Narottama, at last, and found

that the beautiful boy was sweeping the floor and, at intervals, shedding tears. They were tears of love and longing:—"O Krishna! when shall I be Thine?"

Lokanath gently told Narottama:—"Fair of form art thou, child! Tell me who art thou? And why dost thou sweep?"

Narottama threw himself at Lokanath's feet and wept and said:—"I have in my mind clung to thee as my Guru, my Master! A poor child am I: wilt thou not accept me?"

Lokanath had never taken a single disciple, being afraid of being entangled in the vanity of being a "Guru." But he was moved by the lisping words of Narottama and said:—"My child! pure thou art and comely of countenance, and I cannot say no to thee. I accept thee in my service. Mayst thou be blessed by Krishna and Chaitanya!"

"And now tell me who thou art?" asked Lokanath.

Narottama related the story of his life,—of how he had run away from his father's palace, for his heart was filled with a longing to be a servant of Krishna and Chaitanya.

Lokanath was deeply moved. With love in his heart, he embraced Narottama and initiated him in the Faith of Chaitanya. When Narottama asked:—"Master! tell me what is the way of serving the Lord?" Lokanath said:—"My child! the way of service is the Little Way! And never forget that he enters the Kingdom of Krishna who becomes a little child."

So did Narottama become a "child" of Krishna. With purified eyes he looked at the world. With purified eyes he walked on the Path. For him all "works" which were "strifes" were over. His joy was in communion with Krishna and in the service of the poor and broken ones. He sang the Name and he was free from hopes and griefs. And every day, he laboured for the Lord and he sang of the Kingdom of Krishna. And he gave the love of his pure, simple heart to all creation,—to man and bird and beast, to every leaf of the *tulsi* plant, to every ray of light and every grain of sand.

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